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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6766
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0587
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000366

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA

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TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLs](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOSTAGE-TAKING, SITREP # 21

REF: LAGOS 363

Classified By: Acting Political/Economic Chief Shannon Ross
for reasons 1.4 (D/E).

Hostage Welfare Update

¶1. (C) There is no new information regarding the welfare of the hostages. Family letters were given to the journalists scheduled to tour the militant camps this weekend, and Conoff reported he saw a Reuters journalist arriving in Warri this morning. The Shell crisis group agreed to ask released hostage Macon Hawkins to make a public appeal to the kidnappers for the release of the remaining hostages.

Hostage Negotiations

¶2. (C) Delta State Secretary to the State Government (SSG) Emmanuel Uduaghan contacted Conoff to tell him he expected the hostages to be released within 1 or 2 days. The State Commissioner of Transport, Bosin Ebikeme, claimed to be in separate contact with the militants and to have visited them yesterday. Ebikeme said the militants did not trust the GON to make good on its promise of no reprisals. The SSG also confirmed that Chief Edwin Clark was convening a meeting in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State with Ijaw elders, including Oronto Douglas. Douglas claimed at a late afternoon press conference the elders would call for the militants to release the hostages within 12 hours or be disowned. (Comment: If the militants disregard the elders, we are concerned the GON might use this as political cover for military action. Their refusal to respond to the leaders' pleas could be portrayed as incorrigibility. End Comment.)

¶3. (C) Shell reported Oronto Douglas would not begin to negotiate on behalf of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) until the hostages were released. HMG plans a Cobra ministerial level meeting to discuss Douglas' potential role in the negotiations. HMG is also discussing negotiation tactics with NGO head Judith Asuni. Shell sources

claim the militants are asking for Minister of State for Petroleum Daukoru to play a greater role in negotiations.

More MEND Threats

¶4. (C) Oil security contacts report Shell has raised the alert status to "high" at its Bonny Island (including Nigerian Liquified Natural Gas (NLNG)) facilities. The State Security Service (SSS) reportedly released a threat warning to AGIP, Willbros, and NLNG for the next 72 hours. Willbros confirmed they met with the SSS last night and were told that there were credible threats over the next 72 hours. Willbros consequently pulled their personnel from Port Harcourt for that time period.

Military Update

¶5. (C) Delta SSG Uduaghan said militant distrust of the GON and nervousness regarding its plans was reinforced by increased airforce presence in Warri.

Media Update

¶6. (SBU) Media published e-mail statements from the militants accusing the military of unprovoked attacks in the Odidi area and threatening revenge. A press release sent by Cynthia Whyte as MEND secretary threatened a complete

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destruction of Exxon Mobil facilities within 21 days if compensation for the 1998 oil spill was not paid. The military, in statements to the press, denied any casualties in yesterday's attacks.

Consular Update

¶7. (C) There have been no reports of additional attacks on AmCits. One mission Conoff is are in Warri monitoring negotiations and prepared to assist with repatriation. The UK also has a consular officer in Warri to monitor negotiations and assist with repatriation. The head of Shell Security is on standby for repatriation assistance.
HOWE